



## The Auditing Myth: Airfare auditing remarks take a long time

I first heard of Topaz International in 1993 as I was starting my career at Xerox Corporation in the travel department. Xerox was a regular user of the audit service. When I picked up and moved my family to the Hartford Connecticut area to work for Carlson Wagonlit Travel and run the UTC account, Topaz International was once again part of my professional life. But this time *I, as part of the travel agency*, was being audited.

In the short span of two years I had been given the unique perspective of experiencing an audit from both sides. First as the corporate client and then as the agency. The corporate experience helped me see that the additional time required for conducting an audit was a benefit to the travel program. However, the agency perspective is that the additional time is a hardship to productivity and costly to maintain. After being on both sides of the argument, I have come to realize that the extra time needed for documentation is a small sacrifice for the overall success of the audit validation to a travel program.

How much time is needed to document a record with the low fare offering by the frontline travel agents?

**Time:** Topaz recently did an internal study to look at how much additional time it actually takes to fulfill the documentation requirements of an audit. We found at the most it is thirty seconds per PNR. For agencies with the ability to program keys and automate the documentation requirements, the time would be even less. Frequently I hear many (but not all) travel agencies complain about the additional time it takes to document a PNR with the information needed to fulfill an audit. Many times, the agency is over documenting or changing processes that are not required by Topaz or the corporate client.

**Customer Requirements:** When I was in corporate travel at Xerox I wanted to have as much information as possible for all my corporate PNR's. This allowed me the ability to research disputes with enough information at my disposal. I never found the exception codes used by the agency to be detailed enough. The few remarks Topaz requires are mostly required for exceptions. As a customer, this is the same information I needed to do post travel research.

So what does this all mean for our corporate customers? Do not be pushed around. As the customer you must have a foundation of remarks that should be in each PNR, and those are probably not far off from what we require for an audit. Furthermore, if you want to do an audit for one month each year or for twelve months a year, the additional time and cost to your TMC to meet the requirements of the audit are not substantial enough to negate the value.

### About Topaz International, Ltd.

Topaz International provides strategic support to the corporate travel management professional. With 30 years of experience analyzing travel related expenditures, Topaz is a world leader in airfare & hotel auditing, providing benchmark information and consultancy services to improve the delivery of corporate travel services. Supporting travel managers, buyers and agencies, Topaz helps improve performance and facilitate cost savings.

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